

MEDIEVAL SONGS and DANCES

Reval's Troubadours

Janno Pokk, nycelharpa, voice, percussion

Anna Lüssa Heller, percussion, recorder, kamnel

Maarja Uus, recorder, lute, percussion

Endrik Üksvärv, voice, percussion



E232HD

1.	<i>Improvisation</i>	7:30
2.	<i>Mit ganzem herzen</i>	2:38
3.	<i>Yo me enamore de un aire</i>	4:19
4.	<i>Prendes i garde</i>	1:51
5.	<i>A la una yo naci</i>	5:04
6.	<i>Hodie Christus natus est</i>	2:00
7.	<i>Temp gwell eo gwin</i>	3:11
8.	<i>Alleluia Laetatus sum</i>	2:57
9.	<i>Avrix mi galanica</i>	2:53
10.	<i>Por nos de dulta tirar</i>	8:51
11.	<i>Uri tsafon</i>	4:19
12.	<i>Ondas do mar de Vigo</i>	3:19
13.	<i>Improvisation Tibet</i>	4:26
14.	<i>Virgo Dei Genetrix</i>	3:15
15.	<i>Domna pos vos</i>	2:54
16.	<i>Gaudeamus</i>	3:22
17.	<i>Basse danse appelee</i>	2:40
18.	<i>Laude novella</i>	3:02
19.	<i>A ni tsa me</i>	2:43

TROUBADOURS AND TROUVÈRES

This disc features a selection of instrumental works and songs with instrumental accompaniment which can be generally classified in different ways. On the one hand works of a religious nature that belong to the Gregorian rite, canticles of the Court of Alfonso X “*the Wise*”, secular songs of Sephardic origin, and traditional or anonymous medieval European songs.

The works of a purely instrumental nature included here are improvisations in the purest medieval style, recalling an inspiration that embodies and defines Western European musical history.

It was the troubadours who began the documented history of secular music. By troubadours we understand those poets of Southern France who, approximately between the years 1050 and 1292 wrote songs in provençal, or rather, poems meant to be sung. By contrast we understand the *trouvères* to be the poets of northern France, who, between the years 1145 and 1300 wrote and sang songs in French.

It was the passionate Romantics of the 19th century who rediscovered the Provençal legacy of courtly, chivalrous and gentlemanly lyric verse. This refined poetry which exalted women and love diffused from Provence in the 12th and 13th centuries and reached England, Spain (Catalonia and Castile) and Sicily, influenced the German *Minnesänger*, and transformed the great art of Petrarch.

We must be conscious when we approach this music of its double musical and poetic arc. It is very important to always be aware of the social condition that gave birth, spread, and performance of the songs of the troubadours. The music was associated to poetry in a way that is difficult to define precisely, but it is known that both princes and plebeians inspired by their spirit dictated, wrote and performed these songs, performing their own or using the songs of others, or allowing other musicians to rework them. The oral tradition of transmission of these works caused a transformation and globalization which increased the spread of musical activity in a spectacular manner.

It has been said that although Spain had no other musical monument except its *Cantigas*, it would be sufficient to consider Spain amongst the most musically privileged nations of medieval Europe. Fortunately for us, the musical foundation

preserved in the *Ballads of Santa María* of Alfonso X the Wise presents accomplished examples of enchanting lyricism unequalled in other existing medieval genres. Certain tonalities from the Song of Praise marvelously permit us to imagine the style in which Galician troubadours performed even while so accustoming themselves to the state of the court of Castile. As if this were not enough, in 1915 in Madrid the six *Cantigas de Amigo* were discovered by Martín Codax, the 13th century Galician troubadours. The Galician melodies of Martín Codax are of extraordinary importance for European musical history, as they are the only extant examples preserved in music of love songs by a woman.

These feature a popular lyricism in old style combined with a yearning scarcely equaled in Galician popular music. Although the melismatic cadences of these songs are reminiscent of the laudes of Italy, as well as various tunes of the German *Minnesänger*, they have nothing to do with either, instead they recall pastoral songs preserved by the oral tradition of the people of Spain. It is unlikely that there was another court in Europe quite as rich in poets and musicians as the Court of Alfonso X the Wise, where Provençal and Galician troubadours, and minstrels from Castile jostled with minstrel-performers from the different provinces of Spain. The Court also featured minstrels who were Moors and Sephardic Jews. From such a rich and varied musical interchange a rich and portentous flowering of music arose, which resulted in 423 preserved Alfonsine melodies. Amongst these *Ballads of Santa María* there are over thirty types of instruments played by Moorish, Jewish, and Christian minstrels. Most of these ballads are founded in events of the time of Alfonso X and his family, on local tales, and principally in miraculous anecdotes. There are ballads inspired by legendary tales of universal character very much in vogue of the Europe of that time, due to versions in both Latin and the Vulgate. At times the themes are traditional and historical; other times they are fantastical and childlike.

Sefard means Spain in Hebrew, and for that reason the Jews of the Iberian peninsula the most Western territory in Europe, were known as Sephardic. Sephardic music reached its apogee both in Castile and Aragon, and drank of the same sources as popular Castilian and Aragonese music. But Arabic influence is evident in both the rhythms and the instrumentalization, the result being a fermentation of Arab, Jewish, and Christian styles. Sung in Spanish, the basic themes are amorous,

although there are certain wedding songs and lullabies.

The songs of the Western Christian Church are literally called Gregorian, in honor of the Pope who first collected and transmitted the pieces that arose the 5th and 7th centuries. However, the expression *Cantus Gregorianus* also encompasses the uniquely vocal canticles of official liturgies of the Roman Catholic Church.

After the 12th or 13th century, the Gregorian chants were called the *cantus planus*, or simple (plain) chant, with notes of equal length, as distinguishable from those of pagans, instrumental accompaniment of these chants were banned. At the end of the 4th century, female voices were also prohibited, in order to achieve a more severe atmosphere in the churches. The chosen, expert, and highly soloists could sometimes adorn their canticles; the Gregorian chants is derived; the religious cause, and the severity of the dogma which nonetheless has a power and unique effect on our spirituality, meaning that sentiment which nears the human to the divine.

The early music ensemble Reval's Troubadours was founded 2006 in Tallinn, Estonia. Their repertoire consists of the early music until XV century, including both secular and sacral melodies: songs of wine, love, war and other contemporary subjects, as well as Gregorian chants. Those are thousands years old hits, which are skillfully mixed with elements of jazz and rhythm figures from different countries. Reval's Troubadours uses unique combination of instruments: nyckelharpa (national instrument in Sweden), kannel (national instrument in Estonia), lute, different recorders, djembe, tarbuka and voices.

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